

Commander, long-time friends honor Milligan at reception

by Rachel Newton

"We are here to honor a real American hero. As you ponder all the things you will hear said today, I want you to keep in mind, especially those of you who have served or are serving in uniform. Most of us do about 20 years and then punch out. The lady we are honoring today has given enough years to her country, to our Army and particularly to Pine Bluff Arsenal to fill two careers and then some. People like this are patriots," said Col. Brian Lindamood, PBA's 32nd commander, at the May 9 retirement reception for Patsy Milligan.

Milligan, an Arkansas native, retired in May with over 45 years of government service, all them at Pine Bluff Arsenal, and most of them as the commander's secretary. She served for 18 Arsenal commanders.

Before the formal part of the ceremony began, Lindamood introduced Milligan's family and other special guests. "The sooner we get this started, the sooner we can get to crying because someone is breaking my heart," he said, laughing. "If we don't laugh, we are going to cry."

Lindamood encouraged the assembled crowd to read Milligan's bio at their leisure. "I will encourage you to read it because it paints a picture of dedicated, self-less commitment to a cause that is very noble," he said. "I think all of us can say that it didn't matter how you got to know her or how long you knew her, Patsy Milligan was your friend. She serves because she loves to serve, never expecting anything in return."

With everyone standing, Sgt. Maj. Jerry Curtiss read some of the government awards, such as the meritorious civilian service award and the certificate of retirement.

"While serving as the secretary to the Commander of Pine Bluff Arsenal from September 2003 to May 2006, her faithful service and unsurpassed professionalism were instrumental in developing the strong bonds the Arsenal enjoys with its surrounding communities – a foundation that has been invaluable during the major mission changes that have taken place during the last five decades she has served," said Curtiss. "Mrs. Milligan's dedication and exemplary performance which culminate a distinguished 45 year career are in keeping with the highest traditions of government service and reflect great credit upon herself, the United States Army Material Command and the U.S. Army."

As Lindamood held up the retirement pin, he said that this is the part Milligan was looking forward to and the part we all were not. "It all boils down to this little pin. That is 46 years and it seems a shame that it has to be that small. It doesn't seem like it is enough," he said. "I know for a fact that Patsy Milligan will wear this with pride."

When the congressional delegation from Arkansas heard that Milligan was retiring, Lindamood said that they couldn't let the day pass without making it special. "Mike Ross had this flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of Patsy and we flew it over Pine Bluff Arsenal," he said as he held the folded flag, adding that Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee had the Arkansas flag flown over the state capitol in her honor as well.

Col. Gary Wallace, assistant commandant of the United States Army Chemical School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., continued with the ceremony's theme of service by saying that the Arsenal is a well kept secret across the Army. "One of the best kept secrets is the people that are here and Patsy is just one example of the great people in this area and that work here," he said. "The Chemical Corp likes to recognize service. We all know who runs the office. You can't go fishing unless the secretary knows and says you can. This is a contribution you just can't measure."

Wallace then presented Milligan, on behalf of Brig. Gen. Stan Lillie Commandant of the U.S. Army Chemical School, with the Order of the Dragon. "Patsy Milligan has been accepted into the Order of the Dragon and is due all rights and privileges from this day forward. Be it further known that the Chief of Chemical confers on this individual the medal of the order," read Curtiss.

Other recognitions were presented by Jefferson County Judge Jack Jones and Pine Bluff Mayor Carl Redus. "Miss Patsy, on behalf of the 55,000 citizens in Pine Bluff, Ark., I would like to present to you a proclamation," said Redus. "As secretary to the commanding officer for the past 32

years, Patsy's commitment to service is singularly responsible for the seamless change of authority during 17 changes of command. And, whereas her peers and colleagues state that Patsy Milligan has been the guardian of the Arsenal's reputation and the navigator of its focus."

Former Arsenal director of Law Enforcement and Security, Linda Hodgson, also made a special presentation. "I just wanted to come up for a few minutes and speak from the heart about someone who is very special to me," she said. "I can just look around this room and see that Patsy has affected your life in some way. Ways she will probably never know. I honestly have to say, personally and professionally, that I would not be where I am had Patsy not been in my life. I am truly blessed to have her in my life."

She said that the flag that was being flown over the U.S. Pentagon in Washington, D.C., that day was Milligan's flag, flown in her honor for her 45 years of service.

"When the commander approved 31 early retirement slots this year," said Larry Wright, civilian executive, jokingly. "We did not intend for this to happen."

Wright did say that he had a few words to say about Milligan. "Words cannot express the appreciation....this is kinda hard," he said, his words breaking with emotion. "Professionally you have meant a lot to me since I arrived here at the age of 18. One thing I can tell you is that there is nothing better than having one mother, but having three of them is great. Patsy and Maxine certainly taught me everything I know and got me where I am today. Love you."

The command staff then presented Milligan with a silver plate displaying the Arsenal's command crest and her years of service engraved on the surface.

"Putting something like this together (the reception) wasn't easy," said Lindamood. "When Patsy came in to tell me she was retiring believe it or not my first call was not to Larry. I didn't call the sergeant major because this required a special touch. I called Donna Curtiss. Thank you for everything you did to make this day."

Before the podium was turned over to Milligan, Curtiss took a minute to say a few words. "Two years ago, I came strolling in here without my wife and I was lost until I walked into Patsy's office," he said. "You are everybody's friend. I do not know of anyone that reminds us daily of the Golden Rule. She treats everyone the way they expect to be treated and makes everyone feel good about themselves. She is the Arsenal mom."

With tears in her eyes, Milligan said that she wanted to thank everyone who had a hand in putting together the reception. "I know there were a lot of people involved and Donna, I know how hard you worked because I have done it before," she said. "It is wonderful and beautiful. My special colors, everything. You didn't miss a thing. All of you are very special to me and you know that."

Milligan reminded everyone not to forget her. "When the next person comes in just leave a special place in your heart for me," she said. "You will always have a special place in mine."